

Can Kerry's efforts defuse Afghan election crisis?

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Despite the optimism that prevailed before and during the Afghan elections among the global circuits that the presidential elections held in Afghanistan will help in stabilizing the situation in the country, based on the considerable efforts made by the Afghan authorities to make it a success.

The election took place amid an atmosphere of tension and rivalry between the two candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani after the absence of former President Hamid Karzai who did not stand for the election because the electoral law prevents him from running for the presidency for a third term.

Apart from the surge in terrorist activity in the recent months and threats launched to undermine the electoral process which made the percentage of participants at high levels, most observers were hoping that the elections could contribute to consolidate the route towards democracy and development of the country.

The United States expressed its intention to continue cooperation with the Afghan authorities for the interests of both countries, especially with regard to the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon congratulated the Afghans on the "great success" for the presidential elections, calling for the adoption of transparency in the ongoing vote counting operations despite the fact that the top three candidates Zalmay Rassoul, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah spoke about "problems, trespasses and even fraud" that marred the electoral process.

The Afghans themselves were more enthusiastic and exercised their electoral right adhering to exercising their rights and choosing their own future. They delivered a message stating that those responsible for the violence cannot win.

The electoral Commission announced the victory of the candidate Ashraf Abdul Ghani, the former World Bank official, in the second round of the presidential election by 56.44 percent of the votes according to the preliminary results and that his rival Abdullah Abdullah finished second at 43.56 percent.

However, Abdullah refused to recognize the results unless a wide check is done to the alleged frauds which he said could affect the chances of his winning, especially as he has already won by a large margin in the first electoral round.

Differences posed as an alarm that a new crisis in Afghanistan is looming, especially the candidate Abdul Ghani, a former finance minister, enjoys strong support from the Pashtun tribes in the south and east of the country. While his rival Abdullah, who is a son of a Pashtun father from the Kandahar area and Tajik mother from the north, is backed by the Tajik minority in northern Afghanistan.

The US intervened to resolve the conflict through a visit by the US Secretary of State John Kerry who said it was a bid to reduce tensions caused by the disputed results of the presidential election at a time Afghanistan lives a "defining moment" as he said.

Kerry met in Kabul with the Afghan presidential candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Abdel Ghani who both claimed victory in last June elections.

Presidential candidate Ghani said he agreed to conduct a "thorough review" of the vote counting given that such a review will help to ensure the "integrity and legitimacy that the people of Afghanistan and the whole world will believe in."

In spite of the consensus reached by Kerry, some circles expressed concern about the reported intention of Abdullah, who lost election to his rival according to suggested preliminary results, of forming a "parallel government" which will plunge Afghanistan into a "spiral of new problems".

The United States responded quickly and warned that denying the election results after the review could lead to the suspension of the US aid and security support.

Whatever the case, everyone hoped that a settlement of the situation on the results of the presidential election be reached peacefully.

It is necessary for the results to gain recognition of the majority of the population of Afghanistan and the basic political forces, especially after the office of the former Afghan president Karzai stressed that the new president will be sworn in to take up his post on the second of next August as was scheduled in advance.